INFINITY

EWING
LAND
LEISTEN
D'ARMATA

001

WARNING!

The intergalactic marauder Thanos has reportedly been detected in the vicinity of Earth once again!

Not only that, he's come with a group of evil cohorts known as The Black Order. One in particular, **PROXIMA MIDNIGHT**, has been spotted in the greater metropolitan area. If you see her or anyone who may be associated with Thanos and his band of miscreants, please report them immediately to the nearest police officer or super hero.

September 11, 2013

Hey, I'm Luke Cage. I used to lead a team of Avengers, but now I'm looking to focus my time on my family. However, a guy doesn't just stop being a hero, so if you need any help, I've restarted my old business, "HEROES FOR HIRE." I'm strong, I've got unbreakable skin, and I've been at this for a while. My associates, all Avengers Academy graduates, and I are happy to help AND to negotiate, so please don't hesitate to call. For references, please feel free to contact any of the following former customers:

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BEHOLD. AN EARTH WITHOUT *AVENGERS.*

OFF THEY CHARGE TO RESCUE OTHER WORLDS, LEAVING THEIR *OWN* EXPOSED AND FRAGILE AS A NEWBORN BABY'S SKULL...

SUCH GENEROSITY MUST BE *REWARDED*, LORD THANOS. THERE IS A CITY ON THIS BACKWARD ORB YOUR ENEMIES CALL *HOME*, IS THERE NOT?

"NEW YORK."

LET ME *KILL* IT FOR YOU.

A *KIND* OFFER, PROXIMA, BUT...NO. YOUR BUSINESS IS IN *ATLANTIS*--THE CARNAGE BREWING THERE WILL DOUBTLESS APPEAL.

NEW YORK IS EARMARKED FOR YOUR *BROTHER-IN-ARMS* AND HIS *POISON TONGUE*. HIS WAY IS LESS *DIRECT* THAN YOURS, PERHAPS--BUT IT IS *SURE*.

IF WHAT I SEEK *IS* IN THE AVENGERS' CITY, THE EBONY MAW *WILL* FIND IT.

PFFFT. THE *MAW*...

A *BOON*, LORD THANOS.

LET ME GO IN WITH THE MAIN ASSAULT ON THE CITY. *DROP CAPSULES*--A SPOILER FORCE, TO DRAW FIRE AWAY FROM MY BROTHER'S SNAPPABLE *NECK*.

BY THE TIME YOU NEED ME IN THE SEA KING'S COLD PALACES, I WILL HAVE CRUSHED THEIR *RESISTANCE*. KILLED THEIR LAST *CHAMPIONS*. EATEN THEIR *HEART*.

AFTER *THAT*... THE MAW CAN LICK UP THE *MESS*.

AH, PROXIMA. MY DEAR *MIDNIGHT*.

HOW CAN I POSSIBLY *REFUSE*?

PLUNDER IS MY NAME!

PLUNDER IS MY GAME!

I AM THE PLUNDERFUL PIRATE OF PILLAGE, *FEASTING* ON YOUR ILL-GUARDED BOOTY! *FABULOUS PYTHON* IN A WORLD OF TASTY, SQUEAKING *MICE!*

SET YOUR PLUNDER RAYS TO *KILL*, MY HEARTY HENCHMEN! IN THE NAME OF *THE PLUNDERER--*

KILL THE HEROES FOR HIRE!

"PLUNDER RAYS"?

YOU KNOW THOSE PLUNDER RAYS *STING* LIKE A--

--NNNGH!

DAMN!

SO LEARN TO *DODGE*, OLD MAN--

AR

BOSS MAN.

AS IN I SIGN YOUR CHECKS.

I PAY YOUR DENTAL.

DENTAL--

--IS IMPORTANT.

HHOKK

TSS!

LUKE CAGE
UNBREAKABLE.

I DON'T--

--EVEN KNOW--

WHITE TIGER
GOD-POWERED MARTIAL ARTIST.

--IF I WANT THIS JOB--

BEATING UP ON CHUMPS?

WHAT JOB DO YOU WANT?

POWER MAN
WIELDS THE CHI OF NEW YORK.

DAMN HENCHMEN! NEVER ANY PANACHE!

DO EVERYTHING MYSELF--

EXCUSE ME.

PARNIVAL, ISN'T IT?

THAT CRATE FULL OF ***ROBOT PARTS*** YOU'RE TRYING TO PILFER, PARNIVAL?

SPIDERBOT PARTS. BELONGING TO ***ME.***

ENGAGING ***THIS*** SHODDY GANG OF MERCENARIES IS ***ONE*** THING, BUT DID YOU ***HONESTLY*** THINK YOU COULD STEAL--

--FROM THE SUPERIOR SPIDER-MAN

OTTO OCTAVIUS
(SHHH. NOBODY KNOWS.)

OOOFF--

...SORRY, THE ***WHAT-NOW*** SPIDER-MAN?

YOU'RE GETTING ***WORSE***, YOU KNOW THAT?

WAIT, ***WHAT*** DID HE JUST CALL US--?

MERCENARIES. FROM THE LATIN MERCENARIUS-- HIRELING, OR MINION.

OR HENCHMAN!

HUSH, PARNIVAL.

ONE MOTIVATED PURELY BY MONEY. HEROES FOR HIRE-- SAYS IT ALL, DOESN'T IT?

IT ALL GOT SAID A LONG TIME AGO, WEBS--

SPIDER-MAN.

SHOW SOME RESPECT.

LISTEN TO YOUR INTERN, CAGE.

YOUR GRUBBY LITTLE OPERATION CAN FIND SOME OTHER COMPANY TO SPONGE OFF. HORIZON LABS IS UNDER MY PROTECTION.

WELL, THEY DIDN'T HIRE YOU, SO--

THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO.

FOR SOME OF US, HEROISM IS ITS OWN REWARD...

A DAY'S PAY FOR A DAY'S WORK AIN'T HEROIC ENOUGH FOR YOU? MUST BE NICE.

HELL, YOU'RE ON THE TONY STARK DOLLAR--

WELL, I'M AN AVENGER. THAT LEVEL OF SERVICE SHOULD COME WITH A FEW PERKS.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU SAVED THE WORLD, CAGE?

HEY, YOU GO AHEAD AND SAY SOME OF THAT TO MY FACE, SEE WHAT YOU--

GOD! ENOUGH!

SPIDER-MAN'S RIGHT. I DIDN'T PUT THIS MASK ON FOR A PAYCHECK.

I BECAME THE WHITE TIGER TO HONOR MY FAMILY AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.

THAT HAS TO MEAN MORE THAN GUARDING CRATES.

WHAT? TIGER, COME ON--YOU CAN'T JUST--

CONSIDER THIS MY RESIGNATION, MISTER CAGE.

YOU HAPPY NOW? HUH? YOU GOT WHAT YOU WANTED?

'CAUSE YOU ABOUT TO GET--

YES, THANK YOU.

I DID GET WHAT I WANTED.

WHAT--

I GOT A VERY BRIGHT YOUNG LADY TO RECONSIDER A LIFE OF *PAID THUGGERY.* I'D CALL THAT A WIN.

ALTHOUGH, IF YOU *DO* HAPPEN TO SEE HER AGAIN, YOU SHOULD LET HER KNOW...

THWIP

...MY ORGANIZATION IS *ALWAYS* HIRING.

COME, PARNIVAL.

YEAH? WELL, YOUR *BUTT* IS ALWAYS HIRING!

ALWAYS HIRING ME TO KICK IT!

AND IT THINKS MY RESUME IS AWESOME!

YOU ALREADY *GOT* A JOB, KID.

COME ON. LET'S HEAD BACK INTO MANHATTAN, GET A COFFEE.

...

SURE.

"MAYBE THERE'S SOMEBODY THERE I CAN *HIT.*"

BEE! ELL! YOU! EE!

B-L-U-E!

BLUE STREAK!

--CRAZY BASTARD'S GONNA *KILL* SOMEONE--

ALL CARS, HE'S HEADED FOR THE *ROADBLOCK*-- WE'VE GOT HIM *TRAPPED*--

BOOM!

DAMN IT--

CAN'T CATCH THE *BLUE STREAK!*

AND THE *CROWD*-- IS *GOING--WILD!* THEY HAVE *NEVER* SEEN THE LIKE!

COULD THE RUMORS BE *TRUE* OF A LOVE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS HANDSOME DAREDEVIL AND... *KATY PERRY?*

WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY COMMENT!

BLUE STREAK!

BUT WE CAN *CATEGORICALLY* STATE THAT THERE'S *NOTHING* FASTER THAN--

--WAIT, WHAT THE HELL...?

ACTUALLY? *LIGHT* IS FASTER.

AAHHH!

MUCH FASTER. ABOUT A QUARTER OF A MILLION MILES PER *SECOND* FASTER.

YOU KNOW WHAT *ELSE* IS THAT FAST?

X-RAYS. MICROWAVES. GAMMA RADIATION. ANYTHING ON THE *ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM.* ANYTHING I CAN *BE.*

THERE ARE A LOT OF WAYS THIS CAN END, BLUE STREAK.

MOST OF THEM INVOLVE A *LEAD COFFIN.*

GET AWAY FROM ME--

BUT I'M TRYING NOT TO BE THE SCARY-ANGRY LEAD COFFIN LADY ANYMORE.

I'M TRYING TO *REBRAND.*

SO I'M GOING TO BE *NICE* TO YOU.

SNAP!

WHOOOOOOOM

KRAK

OW.

...AND LET'S GO AHEAD AND ADD THAT *WINDSHIELD* TO THE CRIMINAL DAMAGE CHARGES, WHY NOT?

WHAT? THAT WASN'T ME! THAT WAS *HER!* LIGHT-LADY! WHATSERNAME!

GEEZ, WHERE *YOU* BEEN, LOSING STREAK? DON'CHA READ THE *MAGAZINES?*

SHE'S CALLED *SPECTRUM* NOW.

SPECTRUM
LIVING LIGHT. LIVING POWER.
AR

LUC
Costumier

SO! 'OW WAS ZE TEST DRIVE?

FANTASTIC. THE NEW COSTUME LOOKS EVEN BETTER THAN THE OLD ONE.

IT DOES KIND OF RIDE UP A LITTLE, JUST HERE-- BUT IN LIGHT FORM THAT'S NOT SUCH A--

N'IMPORTE QUOI! I WILL MAKE ZE ALTERATIONS IMMEDIATEMENT! NOTHING IS TOO MUCH TROUBLE FOR MONICA RAMBEAU!

IN FACT, I 'AVE UN TRENCH ZAT WOULD SET OFF ZE WHOLE ENSEMBLE TO PERFECTION--

NO MORE TRENCH COATS, LUC.

YOU USED TO LIKE ZE TRENCH COATS.

AH! AND ZAT REMINDS ME--ZERE WAS A MAN CAME BY EARLIER. 'E SAID YOU WOULD KNOW 'IM.

UN AMOUREUX, PEUT-ÊTRE...?

OH, NO. I'M NOT SEEING ANYONE RIGHT NOW.

AND YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT PLAYING MATCHMAKER, LUC. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE LIKE--

AH, MAIS IL ÉTAIT SI PASSIONNÉ! SO INTENSE! AND ALL ZE MUSCLES!

JUST CUT IT OUT AND TELL ME WHAT HE...

...WANTED...

ME? NOT MUCH.

A LITTLE HELP SAVING THE WORLD.

LONG TIME NO SEE, MONICA.

...NOT LONG ENOUGH.

coffee
Cafe
I CAN'T BELIEVE AVA JUST WALKED *AWAY* LIKE THAT...
WEBS WAS THE ONE CAUGHT HER FAMILY'S *KILLER.* HIS WORD MEANS A *LOT* TO HER.
STARK
SO, WHAT, HE TURNS UP AND SUDDENLY WE DON'T *COUNT?*
GNN
AVENGERS SEEN LEAVING NYC ON UNKNOWN MISSION
AND I LIKE HOW *YOU* DID SO MUCH TO STOP HER, "MISTER CAGE." STANDING THERE NOT SAYING A DAMN *WORD--*
WELL, MAYBE SHE HAD A *POINT.*
WE *SHOULD* BE DOING MORE.
OH, SO THE POSTERIOR SPIDER-HOLE WAS RIGHT *ALL ALONG*, HUH?
JUST SWINGS BY ON HIS WEB MADE OF *MAYOR MONEY*, TELLING US HE'S *SUPERIOR*, CALLING US *THUGS*-- THINK I DIDN'T *HEAR* THAT?
MAN GETS HIS OWN *ISLAND*, BUT SOON AS *WE* TRY AND DO MORE THAN STARVE--
BREEDEEP
HANG ON. TEXT FROM JESS.
LOOK, I *HEAR* YOU. ONCE UPON A TIME, I'D HAVE PUT SPIDEY THROUGH A *WALL* FOR THAT NOISE. I'D HAVE SOLD *TICKETS.*
BUT...

NEED BABY WIPES & MILK. CAN U GET?

--J XXX :)

...I'M JUST NOT IN THAT *PLACE* ANYMORE.

HERE'S HOW IT IS.

EVERYTHING--*EVERYTHING*--IS ABOUT MY *DAUGHTER* RIGHT NOW. IT'S ALL DANIELLE. HER AND HER MOTHER, THEY'RE MY *WHOLE WORLD.*

I QUIT THE *AVENGERS* FOR THEM.

LEMME SAY THAT AGAIN CASE YOU DIDN'T HEAR IT. I *QUIT LEADING* THE *AVENGERS.*

AND NOW... NOW I'M DOING *THIS.*

JUST LIKE THE *OLD DAYS.* TAKING CASES, BREAKING FACES. HELL, I'M EVEN TRAINING UP THE *NEXT* GENERATION OF ODD-COUPLE SUPER PRIVATE EYES.

LIKE I'M STILL THAT SAME PERSON I *WAS...*

AND DANIELLE'S *WALKING* NOW. MY BABY GIRL IS GROWING UP SO DAMN *FAST.*

AND I'M LOOKING AT THE WORLD SHE'S GROWING UP *INTO.* WHAT SHE'LL HAVE TO *FACE* IN HER LIFE. AND *EVERYTHING* I SEE...

THIS IS *NOT* THE WORLD I WANT. NOT FOR HER.

IT *NEEDS* TO *CHANGE.*

AND I CAN DO MORE *ABOUT* THAT. I CAN *MEAN* MORE.

THIS THING... IT *CAN'T* JUST BE GUARDING CRATES. PUNCHING DUDES NAMED PARNIVAL.

THAT AIN'T *ENOUGH* NOW.

YEAH, I GOT IT. *HEROES FOR HIRE* IS JUST SOME WORTHLESS $#!% TO YOU AND YOU WISH YOU WERE AN *AVENGER* AGAIN. I HEAR YOU JUST *FINE*, "MISTER CAGE."

COME ON, KID, AIN'T LIKE THAT--

YOU KNOW WHAT? *YOU* QUIT.

YOU GO BEG *TONY STARK* FOR YOUR OLD JOB BACK. GO FIGHT DUDES ON *MARS* AND *GIANT BRAINS* AND WHATEVER. WE'LL DO FINE *WITHOUT* YOU.

MAYBE I'LL *START* MY OWN AVENGERS, ONE ACTUALLY *GIVES* A DAMN...

VIC-- THAT'S WHAT I'M *TRYING* TO--

...HELL..

DANNY, DANNY, DANNY.

YOU KNOW I GOT LOVE FOR YOU, MAN...

...BUT THAT KID IS OFFICIALLY YOUR PROBLEM NOW.

"LOVE?

NEED BABY WIPES & MILK. CAN U GET?

--J XXX :)

COMING HOME. NEED TO TALK ABOUT WORK.

I LOVE YOU.
X

"IN THE FACE OF THE *END*, AT THE BREAKING OF YOUR *SOUL*, YOU FALL BACK ON LOVE?

"*YOU*, DOCTOR? OF *ALL* PEOPLE?

"*YOU*, WHO NEVER FLUNG YOURSELF INTO THE *VOID* ON THE HOPE OF A HEART'S DESIRE?

"*YOU*, WHO NEVER *BURNED* FOR LOVE, AND NEVER *LAUGHED* AT YOUR OWN BURNING?

"YOU, WHO NEVER GAVE *UNSELFISHLY?*

"WHO NEVER LOVED EXPECTING *NOTHING* IN RETURN?

"NEVER OFFERED BEAUTIFUL GIFTS, *KNOWING* THEY'D BE SPURNED AND SCORNED?

"BUT GAVE THEM *ANYWAY?*

"FOR *LOVE?*

"GIFTS OF *DEATH.*

"FOR LOVE OF *DEATH."*

DEATH, DOCTOR STRANGE. SAY IT WITH ME.

DEATH.

D... DEATH...

"LISTEN, DOCTOR. YOU CAN HEAR IT.

"IN THE FIRE. IN THE SCREAMS.

"ALL THAT WE DO...

"...WE DO FOR LOVE."

IN THE NAME OF DEATH! IN THE NAME OF SORROW! IN THE NAME OF CHAOS AND WAR!

IN THE NAME OF THANOS!

HUNT AND KILL!

...WAS THAT AN *EXPLOSION?*

EXPLOSIONS-- PLURAL. A COUPLE OF BLOCKS AWAY, *TIMES SQUARE* OR THEREABOUTS.

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO NEED *HELP.*

COMING?

WE HAVE *OTHER PRIORITIES*--

WRONG ANSWER. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR YOUR *ONE-TRACK MIND* RIGHT NOW.

IF YOU WANT MY HELP WITH YOUR *"PRIORITIES"*--YOU HELP *ME* WITH *THIS.*

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. I CAN'T BE SEEN TO BE *IN-COUNTRY* RIGHT NOW.

IF THEY FIND OUT I'M *HERE*--

OH, YOU NEED A *SECRET IDENTITY?*

YOU'RE IN A *COSTUME SHOP,* GENIUS.

SALE

$5

SUIT UP.

I HAVE ANOTHER *APPOINTMENT*, MINION. MAKE THEIR DEATHS *QUICK*.

MAKE THEM *PAINFUL*.

I WILL *RRREND!* REND AND *TEAR!*

FOR *THANOS*--

NO, YOU WON'T.

WHUDD

NOT IN *MY* CITY.

YOUR CITY, CAGE? *REALLY?*

FALL DOWN, YOU RIDICULOUS CREATURE--

KRAKK

TRY HITTING THEM WITH A MICROWAVE BURST THROUGH THE *HEART*, SPIDEY.

THEY DON'T LIKE IT.

FYZAPSH

HEY, MONICA.

JUST THE *THREE* OF US, HUH?

I MIGHT HAVE A GUY ON THE WAY--

"A GUY." PATHETIC.

GIVE ME *FIVE* SECONDS--

--AND I'LL HAVE THIS WHOLE AREA *CRAWLING...* WITH...

...MY PEOPLE...

SPIDER HERO

THE SPLENDIFEROUS SPIDER HERO. (NO HYPHEN.)

DOES WHATEVER A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER CAN.

AR

TAKE... *TAKE THAT OFF!* TAKE THAT OFF *RIGHT NOW!*

THIS IS AN *OUTRAGE! CEASE AND DESIST,* YOU HOODLUM!

FORGET "YOUR PEOPLE," WEBS. THIS IS A FULL-SCALE INVASION--WE NEED THE *BIG GUNS, THOR,* THE *HULK...*

AH... WELL...

THEY'RE IN SPACE.

SORRY.

WHAT?

THE SMALL SOUL SPEAKS *TRULY.* YOUR *MOTHER BIRDS* HAVE FLED THE NEST TO SIT ON *OTHER* EGGS.

THIS IS A *DOOMED WORLD* NOW.

AN EARTH WITHOUT *AVENGERS.*

THAT'S HOW IT IS, HUH?

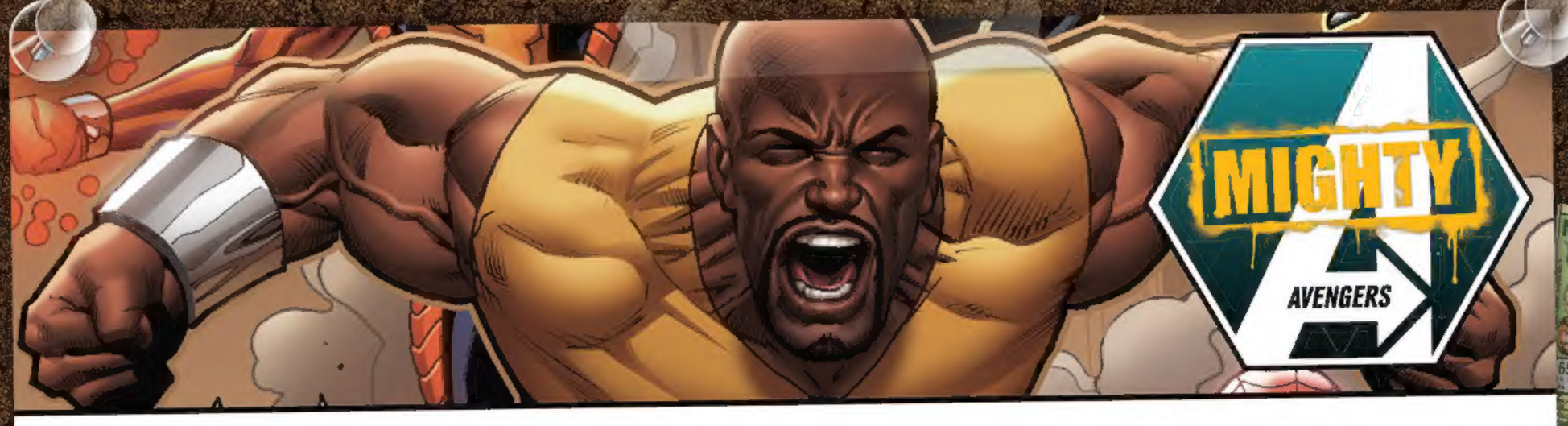
...OKAY.

YOU WANT *AVENGERS*, LADY?

TAKE A GOOD LOOK.

WE'RE THE AVENGERS.

To Be Continued...



So. I'm eight years old.

The newsagent next to the barber shop where I have to get my hair cut every few months sells American comics. One of those comics is The Avengers. Monica Rambeau – Captain Marvel, at the time – is the leader, though they call it 'chairperson,' which sounds very grown-up to my eight-year-old ears. It makes The Avengers seem big and important.

I like Captain Marvel. She's smarter than the others, and she can do the coolest stuff – turn into light, turn into a hologram. That makes me want to look up what a hologram is, which makes my Dad happy. And she's the leader. A couple of years later, when she's written out of the book, I get bored and stop buying it.

Fast forward twenty years or so. I've been on and off with comics, but I'm back on them now. I like what Warren Ellis is doing with NextWave – I'm buying it for Ellis, but if I'm honest I'm buying it for Captain Marvel, too. (She's just Monica at this point, but she's still Captain Marvel to me.) Once again, she's smarter than the others, and she does all the cool stuff. It brings back good memories.

At the same time, there's a big event happening – Captain America and Iron Man are having a fight and everyone's choosing sides. It's hard for me to choose one, myself – Iron Man's argument makes sense, but he's building secret prisons and generally being a bit of a fascist. Meanwhile, Captain America isn't really convincing me, either. So I'm enjoying it, but deep down I'm having trouble finding a reason to care.

It's Luke Cage who eventually gives me that reason, by simply sitting alone in his apartment and waiting to be arrested for doing absolutely nothing. It's a quietly, wonderfully powerful comic that demonstrates the issue clearly, simply, with humanity, and resonates in a way that a man in a flag pontificating just doesn't. (Sorry, Cap. I liked it when you got shot.) After that, Luke and his New Avengers have me hooked.

(Also, Luke's to be one of the few heroes who's allowed to grow and change – having a kid, getting married. I like growth and change.)

Fast-forward a few more years, and Tom Brevoort's emailing me about a new team of Mighty Avengers – led by Luke, backed up by Monica. Do I want to write it?

Yeah, go on.

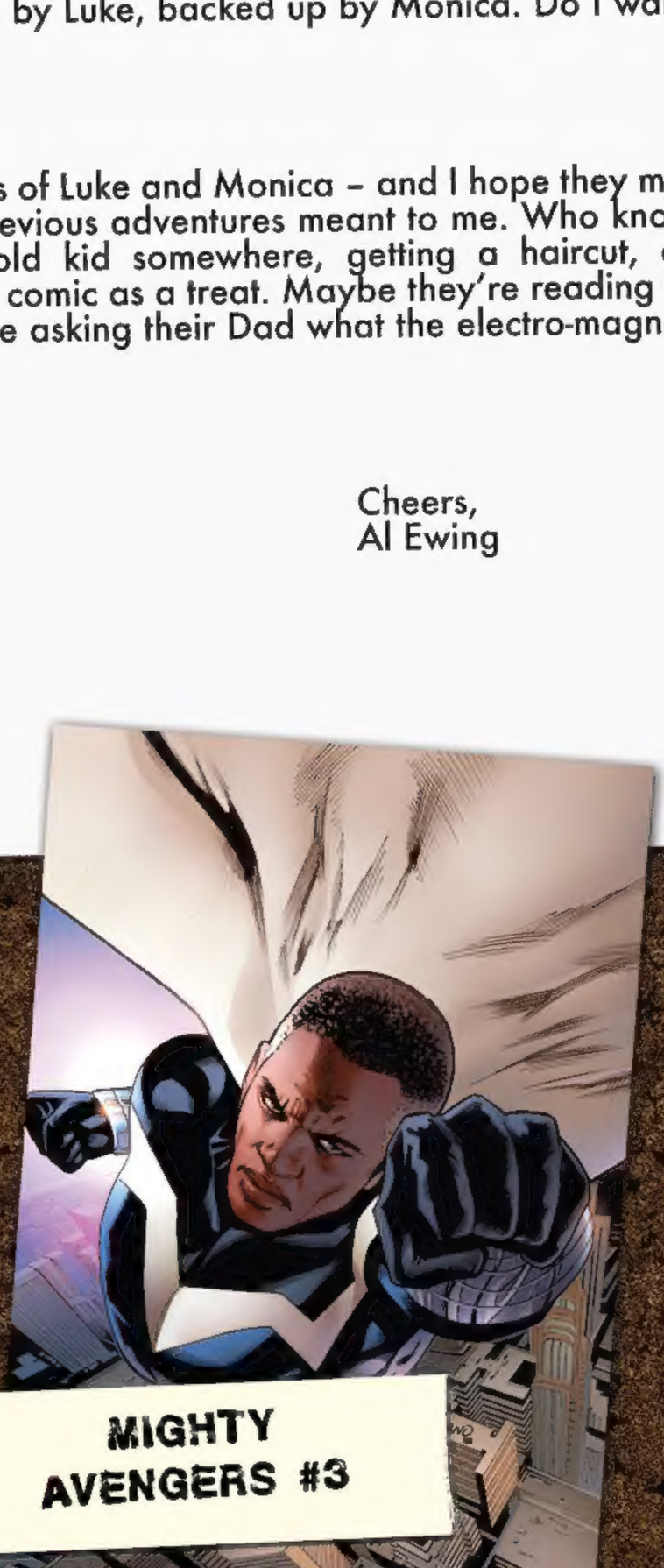
So here are the new adventures of Luke and Monica – and I hope they mean half as much to you as their previous adventures meant to me. Who knows, maybe there's an eight-year-old kid somewhere, getting a haircut, and afterwards they'll get to pick a comic as a treat. Maybe they're reading this comic right now. Maybe they're asking their Dad what the electro-magnetic spectrum is.

I'd like that.

Cheers,
Al Ewing

NEXT ISSUE

MIGHTY AVENGERS #2 VARIANT



MIGHTY AVENGERS #3

Introducing
the MIGHTY AVENGERS.
Earth's Mightiest Heroes
LUKE CAGE • SPECTRUM • SHE-HULK
RONIN • FALCON • THE BLUE MARVEL • POWER MAN • WHITE TIGER
MARVEL

MIGHTY AVENGERS #3 VARIANT

THE ASSEMBLY!

YOUR ONE-STOP NEWS SOURCE FOR ALL THINGS AVENGERS!

With the Avengers off in deep space dealing with the cosmic threat of the Builders in **INFINITY**, who can defend the Earth from Thanos in their absence? That's the question that Luke Cage is going to have to answer in **MIGHTY AVENGERS #1**, coming your way this month from writer Al Ewing (whose AGE OF ULTRON issues of **AVENGERS ASSEMBLE** made such a big impact) and stellar artist Greg Land! Responding to the Hero for Hire's call will be an assemblage of Avengers new and old, including the Superior Spider-Man, the White Tiger, Spectrum (everybody's favorite Monica Rambeau), Power Man, She-Hulk, the Blue Marvel and the breakout character of the year, the mysterious Spider Hero! (Interested parties may also want to turn an eye towards **SUPERIOR SPIDER-MAN TEAM-UP #3** and **4** as well, where our ad hoc group puts in some additional face time during INFINITY!) Some people have been asking whether the Marvel Universe needs another Avengers title, but you'll see the method to our madness once MIGHTY AVENGERS #1 reaches a store near you!

LETTER OF THE MONTH:

Dear Marvel,
I'm late to the party – I just now read ALL-NEW X-MEN #13 and its reference to UNCANNY AVENGERS #5. I've seen a lot of people in the last few weeks talk about having "a conversation on race" and it appears that you're doing that right here, in the pages of super hero comics. All without sacrificing entertainment value. And that's fantastic. Your conversation is about a science-fictional surrogate for race, of course – but hey, it's art. Things stand in for other things. What fascinates me here is that you have two different viewpoints (I suspect Kitty and Alex are standing in for their respective writers, but I may be wrong) who do not completely agree, but they are able to coexist and debate respectfully, all believably within the bounds of the Marvel U. And while they may disagree, one is not the "good guy" and the other "evil." They're both good guys (and gals), both on the same side, even though they don't think in lockstep. Makes me wonder if it could happen in reality.

Very rarely does a discussion in comics require me to internally debate which side I come down on. I really enjoy Brian Bendis' work, and I had the same crush on Kitty Pryde that just about every X-Men fanboy who was young in the 80s had. But I find myself leaning towards Alex's argument.

Why? I've long felt that the Marvel mutants engage in too much self-segregation. It always seemed like a logical disconnect that Xavier thought that mutants would be more accepted by the general population if you gather them all in a place where there's only mutants, have them dress in ways that make them instantly stand out, and send them off to engage in public violence before disappearing without accounting for themselves to the authorities that oversee everyone else. In large part, of course, they do that because that's what super heroes tend to do. But as a strategy to avoid mistrust and suspicion between two groups, it seems poorly considered.

So, Alex's point in his "don't call me a mutant" speech was that "mutant" doesn't define anyone's character, any more than "non-mutant" defines everyone else. I think the focus in ALL-NEW X-MEN on whether "mutant" was a bad word was missing the point – to me, the point was that dividing up people into non-mutant and mutant is categorizing them far too broadly to begin with. There are infinite varieties of people, with or without any particular genetic quirk. Dividing them up into groups is the beginning of the slippery slope – next you start making assumptions about them based on these broad groupings, and that way lies madness. I understood Alex to be saying that calling him a mutant is objectionable because it defines him solely on that basis, diminishing and overlooking everything about him that truly makes him who he is.

Kitty, on the other hand, said that she wants it known that she is a mutant because she knows that there are bigots out there who might "have a problem" with her, and she wants to flag them as such before she emotionally invests in them – like she did with the boy she had a crush on, before he revealed his true character with an anti-semitic remark. But this stance, while it seems practical, also seems pessimistic and a little disappointing coming from Kitty Pryde. Emotionally, I totally understand her position. But racism and bigotry are often complex things. I realize this is a comic book, but few real people are 100% prejudiced or 100% free of prejudice all of the time. The pure, raging bigot and the all-loving saint are vanishingly rare. How, then, do you decide at what point you are going to write people off? Is it the mission of the X-Men to identify bigots in order to have nothing further to do with them – or to continue to do their best for everyone even in the face of prejudice, in order to serve as an example to redeem those capable of redemption? Kitty's stance feels too unforgiving to me. Heroes are supposed to inspire the best in people, not judge them and discard them the first time they falter. Some people are beyond redemption – we've all probably had the misfortune to encounter at least one – but how do you know until you try?

Of course, when you have a machine that can tell you with a beep if someone's a mutant or not, categorizing them that way may be irresistible. But, for that matter, I never liked the existence of "mutant detecting" technology either. It seems to objectify and authenticate the prejudices our heroes are struggling to eliminate. Nature doesn't draw clear, bright lines like that. I often thought that if I had the chance to write an X-Men story, I would reveal that everyone would set off a "mutant detector" if it was adjusted to be sensitive enough – in other words, that being a "mutant" was a matter of degree instead of a bright-line distinction. We are all at least a little bit mutant because we are all part of a species that changes and evolves over generations. Just as with any other trait, the final expression has to do with the interaction of thousands of other traits – not just one. It's never that simple.

And that sums up why I lean toward Alex's position, I suppose – he accepts complexity, while Kitty seems (to me) to be oversimplifying.

Thanks for the great read, in both ALL-NEW X-MEN and UNCANNY AVENGERS. And Make Mine Marvel.

Michael C. Lea

NEXT ISSUE:

AVENGERS TITLES ON SALE

AVENGERS #19
INFINITY TIE-IN! THE AVENGERS, PRISONERS OF WAR!
AVENGERS #20
INFINITY TIE-IN! TOTAL, UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER! IT'S NOT OUR HEROES' BEST DAY...
AVENGERS A.I. #3
EXPERIENCE THE DIAMOND, THE SURREAL NEW WORLD OF THE A.I.! WILL THE VISION SAVE IT OR DESTROY IT?
AVENGERS ARENA #15
NARA VS ANACHRONISM VS BLOODSTONE! SOMEONE'S HEART IS GETTING BROKEN!
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE #19
INFINITY TIE-IN! SPIDER-WOMAN AND THE BLACK WIDOW TO THE RESCUE!
INFINITY #2
THE BLACK ORDER OF THANOS DEMANDS TRIBUTE FOR ITS MASTER!
INFINITY #3
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